

Logistics Flow Analysis  
28 Jan and 23 Mar 70

28 Jan 70 Helms to Laird memo re Logistics Flow Analysis

Attachment: Blind Memo re Logistics Flows To The  
Enemy In South Vietnam, no date

23 Mar 70 Carver to General Earle Wheeler (JCS) memo re Logistics  
Memorandum for Secretary Laird

Attachment: Blind Memo re Communist Logistics in  
the Laotian Panhandle and South Vietnam,  
no date

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28 JAN 1970

**MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable Melvin R. Laird**  
**The Secretary of Defense**

**SUBJECT : Logistics Flow Analysis**

In response to the request levied in your memorandum of 19 January, my associates have prepared the attached analysis of the North Vietnamese logistic support effort to the struggle in South Vietnam. I hope this memorandum meets your needs and requirements. We are planning to send a copy to Dr. Kissinger at the White House since this topic is also one of continuing interest to him.

/s/ Richard Helms

**Richard Helms**  
**Director**

**Attachment**

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**Copy No. 8 of 12**

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REMARKS

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MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Logistics Flows To The Enemy In South Vietnam

GENERAL COMMENTS

This memorandum is an analysis of the recent level and pattern of Vietnamese Communist supply movements and the effect of US interdiction efforts targeted against such movements. It addresses the movement of supplies through Laos and through Cambodia. Our knowledge of supply movements through Cambodia has improved markedly over the past several months,

[REDACTED] Nonetheless, we are still not able to quantify the "Cambodian flow" with precision sufficient to permit meaningful arithmetic comparison with the "Laotian flow", though research and collection activity on this longstanding intelligence problem is of course continuing. The Laotian logistic network is presently in a period of intense, almost crash, activity. This network, incidentally, has been modified this year by the construction of two new supply channels, a new pipeline, and a new border crossing near the DMZ.

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GEOGRAPHIC PATTERNS

Laos

1. Mounting evidence indicates that during the current dry season the North Vietnamese are making greater use of the Laotian route than in past years. By November, they had repaired their badly damaged roadnet, and had reopened the system from the Mu Gia and Ban Karai Passes to the Cambodian and South Vietnamese borders. Subsequently, increasingly heavy levels of vehicle traffic have been monitored moving along this corridor. The North Vietnamese have speedily completed construction of a new major trans-border access route from near the western DMZ southwest to Tchepone, a major Communist headquarters and supply depot in southern Laos. A second petroleum pipeline in the Laotian Panhandle, west of the DMZ and paralleling the new cross-border route, also has been detected by aerial and ground reconnaissance.

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25X1 2. From mid-October to mid-November, the vast majority [REDACTED] were on the roads immediately south of the Mu Gia and Ban Karai Passes. Since then, [REDACTED] an increased use of the Ban Karai Pass and the new logistical corridor which enters Laos in the area of the western DMZ. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]  
that supply shipments toward the southern part of the Panhandle have been higher than a year ago.

In addition, [REDACTED]

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25X1 [REDACTED] the flow through the tri-border area of the Laotian Panhandle is up markedly over last year's level. [REDACTED]

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25X1 [REDACTED] In addition, intensified friendly guerrilla team operations in the tri-border area since October have provided information on apparent increases in traffic levels. Traffic along Routes 96 and 110 leading into and across the Laos/Cambodia/SVN border has been considerably greater than that reported last year at this time. From mid-November 1969 through mid-January 1970, guerrilla units have monitored more than 400 vehicles moving on these roads.

### Cambodia

3. Cambodia has long been an important source of nonmilitary supplies for the Communists. The VC obtain some of their medical supplies and communications equipment there and, most importantly, rice. Cambodian rice is particularly important to enemy troops in the rice deficit highlands of II Corps and northern III Corps, where it probably constitutes their main food source. In an unprecedented move this past October, rice was shipped to Sihanoukville from China and North Vietnam, and in late January another shipment reportedly arrived via a Chinese Communist ship. Some portion of the imported rice was earmarked for delivery to the Vietnamese Communists. These shipments were stimulated by shortages and inflated prices in local rice markets and the exhaustion of government reserve stocks. They seem to confirm that the RKG is to continue in its role as a major supplier of rice to VC/NVA forces.

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4. While Laos continues to be the predominant supply channel for military ordnance, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]  
that Cambodia has acquired significance in this role in the past two or so years. This supply activity is sanctioned by Sihanouk and accomplished with FARK assistance. Because the delivery of such military supplies to the port of Sihanoukville and their movement through FARK channels has been masked by substantial deliveries of legitimate Chinese Communist military aid shipments of arms intended for the VC/NVA forces we cannot now quantify the precise volume though research activity underway may in time produce a reasonable quantification.

5. There have been significant variations in the volume of supplies reaching the enemy via Cambodia in 1969. The RKG, concerned over the increasing numbers of VC/NVA forces on Cambodian territory and convinced that rebellious native elements in Cambodia's northeastern provinces were receiving arms and other support from the VC, embargoed all trade with the VC/NVA forces in early May 1969. By early July, however, the RKG permitted the resumption of deliveries of foodstuffs and nonmilitary supplies. On 25 September a trade agreement was concluded between the RKG and the NLF and, at about the same time, FARK resumed the forwarding of military supplies; however, munitions apparently were released initially only in limited quantities and their shipment to the northeast was forbidden.

#### Across the DMZ

6. Supply movements from North Vietnam through the DMZ into northern South Vietnam probably have declined since the summer of 1968. Until that time several NVA regiments operated just south of the DMZ and were supported through the DMZ. Since then, only a few NVA battalions have remained south of the DMZ for extended periods. It is probable that VC local force units in Quang Tri Province have a portion of their requirements satisfied from across the DMZ, but their requirements also are small.

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COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Supply Flows Through Panhandle

7. The pattern of supply movements to South Vietnam through Laos fluctuates considerably. Although several factors contribute to the fluctuations, such as changing levels of combat and the requirement to maintain some contingency stockpiles, the most important is the seasonal weather pattern. Traditionally, considerably fewer supplies are moved during the wet season (June-September) each year than during the dry season (October-May). Following an increase in October, tonnages usually rise gradually and peak in the February-April period, then start to diminish in May.

8. [redacted] the quantity of supplies moving in the Laotian Panhandle during December 1969 and the first ten days of January 1970 was substantially higher than a year ago. [redacted]

[redacted] the current level of logistics activity is well above that of October-November 1969. Logistics activity has increased in each succeeding month since September and large-scale shipments of supplies in December have continued.

9. Since the onset of the present dry season, pilot reports show an increase of about 10% in truck sightings compared to a year ago, despite a substantial reduction in attack sorties. Compared with daily average truck sightings in October (28) and November (141), sightings in December (222) and January (through the 14th) (348) have shown greater rates of increase than in previous years.

10. [redacted] for this dry season are about 35% higher than during the same period last year. Moreover, the upsurge in [redacted] the beginning of the dry season occurred two weeks earlier this year. Roadwatch reporting from Mu Gia Pass is the only source showing lower truck traffic since October compared with the same period a year ago, probably because of greater use of the access routes further south and because more petroleum is moving by pipeline. Roadwatch coverage on the recently opened southernmost access route west of the DMZ has not yet been established and petroleum shipped via pipeline cannot be monitored.

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11. Most of the sources on truck movements in southern Laos show that substantial volumes of supplies were moving sooner and at higher levels this dry season compared with the 1968-69 dry season. We believe traffic moving within the Panhandle probably is as much as 30% greater than during the comparable period last year.

Requirements and Losses

12. The sustained high level of logistical activity in the Laos Panhandle during the present dry season appears ample to meet the current requirements of Communist forces in Laos and in South Vietnam. It also suggests that the Communists are determined to upgrade their logistics capability and replenish the stockpiles depleted by the sharp reductions in the flow of supplies through the Laos Panhandle and from Cambodia during the summer.

13. The Communists' logistical position thus far this dry season is significantly different from a year ago. Losses due to airstrikes in the Laotian Panhandle in the last quarter of 1969 were well above the comparable period in 1968. In South Vietnam, ammunition losses were higher in 1969 than in 1968. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, reduced flows from Cambodia and through the Panhandle during the summer further aggravated resupply problems. The current emphasis on food supply and forced support from the local population in South Vietnam indicates that the Communists are continuing to have logistic and manpower difficulties.

14. Despite these problems, the current levels of logistical activity should enable the Communists to initiate periodic military highpoints and small unit actions. [REDACTED] substantial shipments of 122mm rockets which will enhance Communist capabilities to conduct stand-off attacks by fire. In turn, if the Communists continue to maintain high levels of logistical activity for the next several weeks, major offensive action would be logistically feasible. However, it should be emphasized that since we cannot determine with precision the throughput level of military supplies to South Vietnam at any given time, no precise correlation is possible. For example, the external supply flow through Laos during the 1968-69 dry season was well above that of a year earlier, yet the overall level of enemy activity diminished.

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Composition of Supplies

25X1 15. Although the composition of supplies shipped via Laos [redacted] during the period 1 December 1969 - 10 January 1970 -- 64% food, 17% POL, and 12% arms and ammunition -- is not markedly different from that seen in the same period last year, there has been a sharp increase in the proportion of arms and ammunition shipments in recent weeks. During the first 10 days of January they accounted for 18% of the total, up sharply from 10% in December. A similar increase was not noted until February of the 1968-69 dry season.

RESULTS OF U.S. INTERDICTION EFFORTS

The Air Campaign in the Panhandle

16. The bombing during the current dry season has caused localized interruptions of traffic in the Laotian Panhandle and has resulted in noticeable changes in traffic patterns from time to time. However, by all measures, traffic on the road network through the Laotian Panhandle has been greater than a year ago. The completion in November of a third major cross-border route from North Vietnam into Laos -- Route 1039 around the western end of the DMZ -- and the construction of additional bypass road segments on the major north-south routes have given the Communists a higher degree of flexibility that lessens the probability of any serious and extended delays in supply movements.

17. There has been a 40% increase in the number of secondary explosions and fires reported by pilots during October - December 1969 compared to the same period a year ago. In addition, as shown in the tabulation below, pilot reports of truck sightings in December 1969 have been up considerably over the level of a year ago, and trucks destroyed or damaged increased significantly in both November and December. Although all reporting of bomb damages is subject to exaggeration, the data show clearly that the current Commando Hunt air campaign is inflicting greater losses

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of supplies than was the case a year ago. This has resulted partly from greater employment of AC-130 gunships as a tactical weapon and also from the increased number of sorties directed against moving targets.

1968-69			
Truck Sightings		Destroyed	Damaged
October	1,043	149	44
November	4,395	304	86
December	5,519	656	200
January (1-28)	8,279	829	411
1969-70			
October	870	77	44
November	4,223	606	235
December	6,882	715	566
January* (1-9, 11-14)	4,529	509	366

\* 1970 data are preliminary.

18. The air campaign's harassment of Communist logistics efforts is clearly shown [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Bomb craters and fallen trees continue to require many man-days of labor and considerably complicate the work of logistics planners in rerouting vehicles to the available bypass routes. [REDACTED] B-52 attacks have caused considerable disruption of land communications lines as well as destruction of roads and supply concentrations. The "deception" program recently undertaken by the enemy in the Laotian Panhandle probably is an indication of the enemy's assessment of the effectiveness of air-strikes against convoys, antiaircraft positions, and communications complexes in December and January. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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19. Another indirect indication of the enemy's appraisal of the effectiveness of the air bombardment can be seen in the new air defense deployments in the North Vietnam Panhandle. These include the deployment near the Laos border of surface-to-air missiles, the possible deployment of additional MIG aircraft to Vinh airfield, and the deployment of 100mm antiaircraft guns near the Laotian border at the Mu Gia and Ban Karai Passes. Recent [REDACTED] [REDACTED] shipments of 100mm ammunition into Laos suggest the possible deployment of these weapons in Laos.

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20. Despite the damage inflicted by bombing, all sources confirm that the major north-south roads in the Laotian Panhandle have been generally kept in excellent condition during the current dry season. For example [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] the Laotian roads leading from Mu Gia (Routes 12 and 1201) were generally serviceable and in good condition.

21. In addition, the Communists have continued during the current dry season to build increased flexibility into the Panhandle roadnet, making it less vulnerable to extended interdiction. For example, west of Route 912A, about eight miles of a probable new western bypass roughly parallel to Route 912A is under construction. If construction continues it would link up with the western bypass route around the Ban Laboy area providing a lengthy alternate for traffic entering through the Ban Karai Pass. A new three-mile-long segment circumventing heavily bombed Foxtrot Traffic Control Point on Route 91 has been built. This bypass, combined with other existing bypass roads west of Route 91, provides a third serviceable alternate for vehicles traversing the Xe Namok valley down to Route 914.

#### Interdiction of Supplies from Cambodia

22. US military efforts are having some success in interdicting the movement of supplies from rear base areas in Cambodia to forward operational areas

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in South Vietnam. Allied forces have captured or destroyed large quantities of supplies, blocked some supply infiltration corridors for varying periods, and -- through the pacification program -- denied civilian porters to Communist forces in some areas. Recent supply shortages -- especially food shortages in III Corps -- attest to some success in allied interdiction efforts. The flexibility of his logistics system has allowed the enemy to offset allied interdiction efforts to a considerable extent, however. The Cambodian sanctuary permits him to store large quantities of supplies safely and to move them at appropriate times via a variety of inland waterway and overland routes (sampan, oxcart, tricycle, and porter) to forward operational areas of South Vietnam.

#### Surveillance of Coastal Shipping

23.

[redacted] the Communists have not relied on sea-borne infiltration as a means of moving supplies into South Vietnam for a number of years. Although small craft may bring in some supplies from North Vietnam and Cambodia, we believe it is highly unlikely that trawlers have been able to evade US Navy patrols. During the latter part of 1969 there have been two, possibly three, detected sea infiltration attempts by the Communists into South Vietnam. These unsuccessful attempts -- one each in September, November, and December -- probably destined for the Ca Mau peninsula, are the first detected indications of Communist efforts to use seaborne resupply since March 1968. They may reflect some deterioration of the Communist supply situation in the Delta.

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#### CONCLUSIONS

24. Despite the many difficulties caused by allied interdiction efforts, the Communists' overall logistic system continues to function adequately. The current level of enemy resupply through the Laotian Panhandle is well above that of a year ago, possibly as much as 30%. It is not possible to say that this tempo of resupply gives the enemy an "unprecedented new combat capability," but at a minimum it appears adequate to support periodic military highpoints and, if continued, major offensive activity. The enemy's Cambodian route, which has become a significant source of arms and

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

23 March 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR: General Earle G. Wheeler  
Chairman  
Joint Chiefs of Staff

SUBJECT : Logistics Memorandum for Secretary Laird

1. Per our telephone conversation last week, attached for your information is a copy of the note on "Communist Logistics in the Laotian Panhandle and South Vietnam" that I gave Secretary Laird at our weekly meeting on Monday, 23 March. This memorandum was prepared under the aegis of [redacted] Deputy Director of our Office of Economic Research. Our DIA colleagues were consulted during the course of the attached memo's preparation and saw it before it was typed in final form. It was, however, presented to Secretary Laird as an Agency paper, not as a joint DIA-CIA effort.

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2. As I understand it, our colleagues in DIA are in substantial agreement with most of the judgments save that they take some exception to our position in Section II (on page 2), where we explain our reservations about the feasibility of attempting to quantify the Laotian logistics flow in overall numerical terms.

3. I told the Secretary that if he had no objections I wanted to send a copy of this paper to you, the Joint Staff and to General Bennett. He concurred readily. I am, therefore, sending copies of this memorandum and its attachment to General Bennett and Admiral Johnson.

George A. Carver, Jr.  
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

Attachment

[redacted]  
Copy No. 8

cc: General Bennett (copy no. 9 of attachment)

Admiral Johnson (copy no. 10 of attachment)

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Lt. General Donald V. Bennett

GACarver, Jr.

Attached for your information is a copy of a memorandum I have sent to General Wheeler and its attachment, a copy of a note on enemy logistics in Laos prepared at Secretary Laird's request and submitted to him on 23 March.

George A. Carver, Jr.  
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

Attachment

Copy No. 2

cc: Admiral Johnson (Copy No. 3)

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## MEMORANDUM

Communist Logistics in the Laotian  
Panhandle and South VietnamIntroduction

This memorandum is an analysis of certain aspects of the VC/NVA logistics situation in South Vietnam. The first part of the memorandum responds to specific questions about enemy resupply requirements in South Vietnam during 1968-69 and discusses current estimates of these requirements. The memorandum then describes briefly the higher level of logistical activity noted in the Laotian Panhandle this dry season compared with a year ago and some of the reasons for this traffic.

I. Communist Resupply Requirements in South Vietnam

The 350 ton a week figure [redacted] is the most recently published national intelligence estimate of that share (50 tons a day) of the external resupply requirements of VC/NVA forces which moved into South Vietnam via Laos.\* At the same time this estimate was made, the community also agreed on estimates of the volume of supplies obtained via Cambodia (35 tons a day, mainly food) and directly across the DMZ (some 15 tons a day). All of these estimates applied to the November 1968-April 1969 period.

The July 1969 estimate that VC/NVA external resupply requirements were about 100 tons a day is still generally valid. Since July, however, we have acquired [redacted] reporting on the role of Cambodia in supplying VC/NVA forces. This intelligence has made it possible for us to derive at least a partial quantification of the volume of arms and ammunition supplied by the Cambodian route. We now estimate, for example, that at least 2,000 tons of ordnance deliveries from Cambodia took place between October 1968 and January 1970. On the basis of this quantification, the July 1969 estimate would seem to have overstated the volume of supplies moved via Laos by about 10 percent. Since the estimates of both supply requirements and logistics flows are subject to a large

\* The estimate was published in SNIE 14.3-69, Capabilities of the Vietnamese Communists for Fighting in South Vietnam, 17 July 1969.

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#### Guerrilla Team Reporting

Thus far this dry season, reports from friendly guerrilla units (FGU's) have yielded probably the best information on enemy truck activity in the southernmost part of the Panhandle. From December through early March, FGU's detected about 1,100 vehicles moving over portions of Routes 96 and 110 in the immediate tri-border area. In many instances the teams have been able to identify the vehicles by type, size, speed, load status and, in a few cases, by type of cargo. During the same period last year, FGU's monitored about 400 vehicles in the tri-border area; however, last year there were fewer FGU roadwatch missions conducted and less effort was given to counting trucks.

#### III. The Significance of the Increased Logistic Activity

Several years of observing the pattern of enemy logistics activity make it clear that no direct correlation can be drawn between the level of logistic activity in the Laotian Panhandle and Communist military intentions in South Vietnam. In addition to the fact that these logistics flows follow seasonal patterns dictated by weather conditions, the high flow during the current dry season can be explained by a number of factors:

(1) Stepped-up external supply flows have not characteristically been accompanied (or immediately followed) by proportionate increases in combat levels. For example, supply flows during the

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1968-69 dry season exceeded flows of the preceding year but combat activity in South Vietnam actually diminished.

(2) The closure of both the Laotian and Cambodian logistic systems during the 1969 rainy season contributed directly to the need for greatly increased supply flows this dry season if the enemy is to rebuild his depleted stockpiles.

(3) The Communists clearly have a need to replenish stocks (while at the same time meeting current needs) if they decide to again close down or sharply reduce logistic activity in the Panhandle during the 1970 wet season.

(4) Part of the upsurge in logistics flows may reflect a decision to have in-country stocks at levels high enough to provide the Communists with a supply reserve for use during a cease-fire or other political accommodation which might restrict their freedom of action and access to local sources of supply. Stepped-up supply flows could help to ensure the Communists a necessary independence from external sources of supply after a cease-fire became effective.

We are reasonably confident that if the dry season flows at their current rates are maintained through late April or May the Communists will have restored their stockpiles to pre-1969 rainy season levels. This judgment is supported by analysis of both current traffic flows and external resupply requirements.

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the Communists are successfully meeting performance criteria established for this dry season in the Laotian Panhandle. If, however, the enemy were to greatly accelerate the tempo of his logistics activities during the next few months, the possibility of supply preparations being related to plans for a major offensive would seem more tenable. We would in this event, however, also expect to see a sizeable increase in the number of troops entering the infiltration system.

#### IV. Changes in Logistics Requirements in the Laotian Panhandle

The resupply requirements of Communist forces deployed in the Laotian Panhandle have also increased this dry season compared with the same period last year. The higher requirements are mainly attributable to the significant increase in effective truck losses, and reported secondary explosions and fires -- all of which were achieved despite a 22 percent reduction in the number of attack sorties (see table, below). These measures of the effects of air

interdiction clearly demonstrate the high price being paid by the Communists in maintaining the Laos logistic corridor.

Communist Daily Losses in the Laos Panhandle

	<u>1968-69</u> <u>(Nov-Feb)</u>	<u>1969-70</u> <u>(Nov-Feb)</u>	<u>Percent</u> <u>Change</u>
Effective* Truck Losses	18.6	30.8	+66
Secondary Fires	105	117	+11
Secondary Explosions	81	104	+28
Attack Sorties	410	321	-22

The consumption of supplies has also probably increased in the Panhandle during this dry season, particularly in the case of POL needed to accommodate increased truck traffic through the Panhandle. Food consumption remained at about the same level as last year, as the reduced food requirement for a lower rate of personnel infiltration was offset somewhat by a moderate increase in food requirements

Weapons requirements also increased as the Communists deployed more and larger AAA pieces in the Panhandle and the overall level of AAA expenditures may also have increased.

\* Effective losses are computed by an agreed CIA/DIA formula that deflates the number of trucks reported destroyed by 25 percent and those reported damaged by 75 percent -- to adjust for probably inaccuracies in pilot reporting and enemy capability for repairing damaged vehicles.

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